

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were prepared by Segment 2 participants and address the landscaping recommendations referenced in Appendix I, and also contain possible lighting and signage considerations.

- a. The Loudoun County Entrance Gateway Guidelines should be reviewed and endorsed by all Segments of the Task Force. The goal should be for implementation in all four segments.
- b. Encourage property owners and new development applicants to incorporate landscape design guidelines as depicted in the Loudoun County Entrance Gateway Guidelines—Exhibit 2.
- c. These include low rising landscaped berms, white three- or four-board white fencing, stone walls, stone piers, along with Virginia native trees and shrubs planted in such a way as to frame the corridor, without blocking visual sightlines to existing and future businesses located along Route 50.
- d. As roads are improved and adjacent properties developed, encourage consolidation of access points to Route 50, which will allow more opportunity for landscaping along the edge of the road and a more attractive and consistent appearance. All landscaping and lighting must follow VDOT guidelines for planning within the right of way, maintaining sightlines and limiting plant heights.
- e. The County should consider a way to fund near-term implementation of the proposed Loudoun County Entrance Gateway Guidelines. This will require working with the individual property owners on acceptable landscape design for their property frontage, obtaining necessary easements, and securing maintenance commitments from each property owner. An improved appearance of the corridor will attract the higher use development the County hopes to achieve with implementation. Land values in the corridor will increase faster, generating additional tax revenues that could be used to pay off debt associated with implementation of the landscape plan.
- f. Provide median plantings. VDOT generally will not allow the median plantings unless a credible entity such as a Homeowners Association, shopping center, or business park developer takes on the maintenance obligations. Any plantings VDOT does allow will need to be low to the ground and slow growing, so as not to impede line of sight. Cars travel between 50-60 mph, so plantings should primarily be large, bold, and colorful groupings. Spring and summer blooming plants or

## Appearance – Lighting, Signage and Landscaping Features

- plants with colorful foliage are recommended. Wildflowers or similar plants could be very attractive if properly maintained and serve to enhance the landscape theme.
- g. Low maintenance is an important criterion for selection and location of plant materials in all locations.
  - h. Create an Adopt-A- Highway program where communities, businesses, citizens groups, or individuals can take responsibility for plantings and maintenance of specific roadway segments.
  - i. Lighting—Well-planned lighting along the roadway could enhance roadway safety and the overall aesthetic appearance. Property owners should be encouraged, and for new applications required, to provide standardized roadway lighting at intersections and, if feasible, at regular intervals along at least one side of Route 50. The County should develop a cost-sharing proposal with property owners for the installation and ongoing maintenance and electric costs. Lighting for adjacent parking areas that may be visible from Route 50 should utilize the similar style light fixtures for uniformity.
    - (1) Streetlights should be located at intersections or where needed for safety of vehicles and pedestrians.
    - (2) Street lighting should be designed at residential lighting levels. All fixtures should direct light down onto roads, signs, parking lots, and walkways. The only exceptions may be flashing signals or other warning lights critical for traffic control.
    - (3) Light poles should be black, decorative, fluted, fiberglass poles.
    - (4) Lighting should be 12 to 14 feet in height at pedestrian paths or 18 to 20 foot heights at vehicular roadways.
    - (5) Lighting for commercial/mixed use development should be limited to providing safety and security for users.
    - (6) No neon, flashing, traveling or intermittent signs should be allowed along the roadway.
    - (7) If there is a trail, pedestrian pole lights should be located between the trees at regular intervals.
    - (8) Some architectural or landscape spotlighting should be permitted to highlight key architecture elements, landscape and signage.

- (9) Lighting for commercial/mixed use development should be arranged as to reflect light away from adjacent residential property and streets.
- j. If the Landscaping Concept is implemented up front, the lighting plan along Route 50 should be installed at the same time.
- k. Signage—The Route 50 Corridor would be well served by a comprehensive monument and signage plan to improve the visual impact of development. This would also help avoid dangerous traffic conditions with visitors looking for nonexistent or poorly planned signage to reach their destination. Several categories of signs should be planned, including a corridor entry monument, destination/wayfinding signs, community message boards, crossroad signs, street-name signs, and business/tenant signs. The plan should determine best location and scale, and develop a management and maintenance plan.
- (1) The style of the signs should provide unified elements to increase visual appeal and import and complement the architectural style of the area. Several elements that would be attractive and unifying include:
  - (a) Signs made of carved wood (or hardened plastic for easier maintenance)
  - (b) Signs of a consistent color, perhaps black or hunter green, with similar lettering style and color (perhaps gold leaf)
  - (c) Signs with a consistent shape, outline, symbols (such as the Loudoun County seal), and decorative finials, framing, and posts (see Fairfax Corner sign design).
  - (d) Signs incorporated into larger monuments, where appropriate, of stone or masonry, and complimentary of surrounding architecture.
  - (e) Corridor entry monument – although the entry into the Route 50 corridor isn't in Segment 2, the team recognized the need for an attractive, new, corridor entry monument. This would be a fairly large monument perhaps with a core sign made of black, carved wood (or hardened plastic) with “Welcome to Loudoun County” in a distinctive script of gold letters. The sign should be made substantial by incorporation into a stone or stacked stone monument accented with white, 3-board fencing and dramatic landscaping and spotlighting.

- (f) Destination/wayfinding signs – a combination of destination directory signs and mile-markers could be used to direct visitors and tourists to historic areas and retail shopping within the Route 50 Corridor and beyond. These signs should be neat, distinctive, easy to read, and appropriately located at decision points on both Route 50 and secondary arterial roads to provide efficient and safe directions. A visitor's guide or pamphlet could be developed to provide detailed information on various destinations with photos of the new signs, and made available through retail information centers or Loudoun County visitor's center(s).
- (g) Destination directory signs – signs made of black, carved wood (or hardened plastic) with the names of historic and retail destinations in easy-to-read, printed gold letters. Each historic marker should be similar in shape, post design, framing, and decorative elements (such as the Loudoun County seal) as to be easily recognized. The signs should provide directional arrows or mileage to the destination. Retail destinations should be listed by the retail center name, not individual retailers, for example "Dulles Town Center." Business/tenant signs are discussed below.
- (h) Mile-markers – small black wood or granite posts with gold mileage numbers. The style should be similar to the destination directory signs, perhaps emulating the post design.
- (i) Community Message Boards – signs to provide local residents and visitors with information about upcoming events, such as festivals, celebrations, sporting events, performances, services offered, local organizational meetings, etc. These signs would be used for advertising events in retail public spaces and more significant residential events. They would be located at important crossroads adjacent to retail shopping and residential areas. These signs are not envisioned as providing advertisements for specific retailers.
- (j) Crossroad signs – include signs along Route 50 to inform travelers of upcoming major crossroads. These signs could be a single black wood panel with the carved street name in gold lettering. The posts would be similar in style to the destination directory signs.

- (k) Street name signs – signs with the names of streets, rather than being the typical metal sign on a metal post, would be styled similar to the adjacent residential areas of South Riding and Stone Ridge. The street name sign is framed with decorative black metal mounted atop a fluted black pole.
- (l) Business/tenant signs – directional business/tenant signs could be located on Route 50 and secondary arterial roads at decision points. These signs should be similar in concept and scale to the destination directory signs but without the County Seal. The signs located along Fairfax County Parkway at Fair Lakes Parkway directing visitors to anchor tenants at points west and east are a good example.
- (m) Route 50 business/tenant signs – limited to large retail shopping centers and office parks with 100,000 square feet or more. Signs should be a maximum height of 10 feet, 60 square feet of total signage facing, or whatever size is required to be readable at posted speed limit. Name of shopping center (plus 1 or 2 major tenants therein) or name of office building to be posted with directional arrows.
- (n) Secondary roads business/tenant signs – for multi-use projects (4 or more uses) 1 identification monument/directory sign at each external street entrance, maximum of 2 monuments. Signs should be a maximum height of 6 feet, and contain 30 square feet total signage facing, or whatever is required to be readable at posted speed limit.
- (o) Internal directional and tenant signage – internal directional signage (perhaps a scaled down version of the Route 50/secondary road signage) is desired. Pin mounted, individual rear-mounted signage (can be internally lit, or front-lit). Each tenant within a project should be similarly styled. Signs should be sized to 1 square foot per linear foot of storefront, not to exceed 30 square feet total for each use. The signs used at Fairfax Corner are very attractive.
- (p) Other considerations – it is desired that no offsite business or civic advertising be allowed. No billboards, pole mounted or roof signs, or internally lit signs (except where noted above). No sign higher than the building on a site.

- (q) Another attractive sign would be to install banners on distinctive light poles near historic areas or upscale retail areas. The banners could be themed or seasonal in design.
- (r) The County needs to enforce existing sign ordinances to make sure signage size and location are consistent with the signage ordinance and sign permit. Signs also need to be maintained in order to avoid becoming an eyesore. Encourage private property and business owners to remove obsolete, unattractive, and over-scaled signs.
- (s) Provide funding or incentives to implement standardized signage to replace the type of signage existing today. We recommend a cost-sharing proposal with the existing business owners on costs to replace signage following new standards.